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The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
KATHLEEN BLISS

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DEAR MEMBER,

Most of us have experienced during the last few months, probably in some trivial incident, the invigoration brought into ordinary daily life by the return of the service men. The bus conductor clatters down the steps at top speed and cracks us a cheery joke. The fishmonger stupifies us with his offer to fillet the plaice. The fact that we hear hardly anything about the foresight and organization which lie behind this return of several million service men and women to civilian life is the highest praise of its orderliness and efficiency. Things might have been otherwise.

THE RESETTLEMENT OF SERVICE MEN

A friend of the News-Letter, who has taken a leading share in the resettlement of service men, has written us the following account of what is going on.

"The Services have done, and are doing, an excellent job in connection with demobilization. Great care has been taken over the details of every man and woman's departure into civil life. The brilliantly organized dispersal procedure, the good suits, the substantial period of leave with full pay and allowances, the reception of the returned Prisoners of War—all these are the outward sign of the revolutionary change which has come over the Services in the treatment of their men since the last war.

"The result is that men are leaving the Services in a friendly and appreciative frame of mind. The importance of such an attitude towards the Services cannot be exaggerated when the country may soon have to decide for or against conscription.

The Resettlement Advice Offices

"These have been a conspicuous success, and are an important experiment in a new relationship between the civil service and the general public. It will be very interesting to see if these offices are retained once their immediate purpose has been fulfilled.

Training Schemes

"The various training schemes are working well, but difficulties of accommodation and staff curtail the numbers of trainees. The recent announcement by the Minister of Labour, which will be a serious blow to many boys now at school, that 90 per cent of the places at the universities for the year beginning in October, 1946

are to be reserved for those who have done war service, underlines these difficulties.

" Many of the criticisms levelled against these training schemes arise from a misunderstanding of the conditions which govern eligibility. Many men, for example, apply to be taught a new trade, when they are already skilled in another. This the Government naturally is not prepared to do—especially when, as is usually the case, the applicant is attempting to leave an unpopular trade, where labour is scarce, to enter a trade where there is a surplus of labour.

The Appointments Department

" This department is having the most difficult time, and coming in for the most criticism, of which a great part is certainly undeserved. This department has the task of placing officers—and others too—in suitable employment, and is, therefore, of necessity almost entirely dependent on the co-operation of employers. I wish that I could say that I really felt that employers generally were doing everything possible to help in this tremendously important matter. In the Annual Meetings reports of big companies, beyond a few references to re-instatement, I have never read of any chairman saying that his company intended to take on and train at a good starting salary so many officers, as a part of their national duty and regardless of dividends.

" The advertisements of well-paid posts in *The Times* seem almost invariably to stress the need for recent civilian experience, and rarely, if ever, to show any desire or preference for someone with war experience.

" There is, I should say, a very great risk that as after the last war we shall have a large number of dissatisfied ex-officers of all ages in the country, and I need not emphasize in the Christian News-Letter the waste and tragedy of such a happening.

Relations of Ex-Service men and Civilians

" I get excellent reports as I go round the country of the way in which service men are settling down in industry, and tackling their jobs. They seem to bring a keenness and freshness to their work, which I have heard widely commented on. It shows clearly, I think, that service training does not do any harm to the average man, and that is an important discovery for a country such as ours with its long tradition of opposition to military service.

" Service men and civilians seem to be mixing in well together. Several managers have commented favourably to me on the modesty of the returned service men, and on their generous appreciation of the civilian war effort.

" The British Legion is in a position of considerable importance here and much depends for good relations between ex-service men and civilians on whether the Legion bases its appeal to its new

members on self-interest or on something higher. In my opinion the Legion has often tended to underline the differences between ex-service men and civilians, especially in its claims for preference for ex-service men. There are hopeful signs of a broadening of outlook, which would be easier if ex-service men did not need an Association to fight for their lawful rights. It should be the business of the Government and the public to see that they get them as their honourable due, but the number of cases the British Legion appear to win against the Ministry of Pensions seems to indicate that this side of its work is still needed.

Preference

"There is considerable difference of opinion on the subject of preference for ex-service men. The issue is a very difficult one to decide. I notice that generally Conservative speakers favour preference, and Labour speakers are against it. I think that those who are against it are both wiser and fairer in their judgement, though it is not an easy matter to make up one's mind about.

The Disabled

"Schemes for the training of the physically disabled have been extended and improved. A large new class has been added to the category of disabled persons since the last war—those suffering from neuroses and discharged on that account. Twenty-five years ago the diagnosis and treatment of neuroses was in its earliest infancy: the man who was 'difficult' was more often treated as an offender than as a patient. At present very little suitable treatment or after-care is available in the country, nor can the lack of adequately trained psychiatrists be speedily made good.

"These neurotic cases will, therefore, depend to a very large extent for their recovery on their friends, relations, employers and fellow workers and on social or religious groups which give them the friendship they need. Too many people still regard anyone who has a mental breakdown with a mixture of suspicion and fear. A recent Report published by the Ministry of Health [1] draws attention to this whole subject, and at the same time makes it clear that when these men do receive special consideration from their employers, they do succeed as a rule in making good and holding their jobs.

"It is important news that the Rockfeller Trust has given a grant of £22,000 for an Institute of Human Relations at the Tavistock Clinic. The staff of this new Institute will be a team of psychiatrists who worked together during the war. Their work will be of value not only to individual sufferers, but to industry where the choice of the right job and the right conditions of work may turn a useless worker into a useful one.

[1] Reports on Public Health and Medical Subjects, No. 93. A Report on *The Readjustment in Civil Life of Soldiers Discharged from the Army on account of Neurosis*, by Eric Guttman, M.D., M.R.C.P., and Elsie L. Thomas.

" My own special dream is to see the idea of the Army Physical Training Development Centres used in civil life. These centres received recruits, mainly youngsters, who were below standard when they joined the Army. The effect of eight weeks' training on those lads had to be seen to be believed ; they were literally new people. Anyone who has worked amongst factory lads knows the need for such centres, and I am certain that every big industrial town ought to run one, and that every firm that employs young people should support it financially."

Our correspondent's account of the return of service men raises at least two points on which sharp division of opinion is possible. One is the question of preference for service men. Thousands of people have to make day-to-day decisions on this matter, but a hard and fast rule upon it is quite impossible.

The other point raised by our correspondent which ought to be in our minds as a social question of great urgency and difficulty is that of the resettlement of officers.

One of the astonishing contrasts of modern war is that the fighting forces have presented to the enemy the aspect of an impersonal and ruthless machine, but from within, these same forces are in many respects remarkably humane societies, in which the care of the individual is a constant claim on the attention of commanders and the provision for welfare far in advance of conditions normally prevailing in industry.

The method of the services has been to choose as officers men who have the capacity to deal with men, inspire their confidence and care for their needs. This method was based on the assumption that technical training can usually be added, but that it is impossible to inculcate a gift for leadership into a man who, however well qualified technically, has no natural capacity to lead.

There are two main reasons for the difficulty of absorbing and using to the full in industry all the capacities of the good officer. One is that modern industry does not, and ought not to, assume responsibility for as large an area of a man's life as is assumed by the services in time of war. The all-round qualities of the good officer cannot find a full outlet for the simple reason that the functions which he exercised in war-time are divided up between industry and the general activities of society, which lie outside a man's daily work. Another correspondent to whom this News-Letter was submitted in draft writes on this question : " It is not possible to urge firms to expand their managerial ranks, without regard to industrial needs. In my judgement, there are few conditions more unhealthy socially than an industry or a firm with the managerial or staff level unduly swollen, and the idea of encouraging the

tendency in order to provide room for ex-officers has its dangers and should be challenged."

The other reason for the difficulty of absorbing ex-officers into industry is that industry on the whole chooses men for their technical qualifications and trusts to luck that they will be able to get on with fellow workers and get from them their full contribution. In view of the large number of problems in industry which arise from the mishandling of men, more imagination could be let loose on this question not only at the staff level, but at all levels. If ability to understand and handle men were given greater weight as a criterion of appointment the scales might be less heavily weighted against the service man.

KENNETH MATHEWS

Two years ago, as we announced in the News-Letter at the time, the Rev. Kenneth Mathews joined the staff of the Frontier Council after four years of active service as a naval chaplain. His work was to help the Churches at home in any way they might wish, to receive returning service men and help them in their readjustment to civil life. He made himself thoroughly acquainted with what was being done by the services for the welfare of the men and women in them and for their return to civilian life. This information he passed to the Churches, attending many conferences and groups up and down the country, and helping them in discussion to make their own plans for returning men. He shared in the work of interviewing and selecting service candidates for the ministry and took a leading part in a number of courses and training week-ends for lay people, making use of service experience.[1]

This is the kind of work—a special task which has to be undertaken immediately to meet special circumstances—which the Christian Frontier with its flexible organization is peculiarly fitted to perform. After rendering this valuable service Mr. Mathews has now gone to work in a parish in the Chichester Diocese. The News-Letter was constantly enriched by his experience and his wide variety of contacts, and he will be greatly missed.

INDIA

Ten days ago the recommendations of the Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission on India was published as a White Paper, read by the Prime Minister to a House which was unusually crowded for any discussion on Indian affairs and seriously attentive. A long chapter in British history is drawing to a close, and it is still uncertain whether that chapter is to end in bitterness and bloodshed or in hope.

In the brief debate which followed the reading of the White Paper, Mr. Churchill recalled that in 1942 the Government offered

[1] A full treatment of many aspects of the work of the Churches for returning men will be found in *Welcome Home*: "The Church and the Returning Ex-service men and women." S.P.C.K. 6d.

dominion status (including the right to secede) subject to certain provisions, of which the first was, Mr. Churchill continued, " that there should be broad, real, sincere agreement between the main Indian parties." Such agreement was not forthcoming and Sir Stafford Cripps, who carried the offer to India, returned without delay.

After Sir Stafford's departure many things happened in India which increased the tension. The civil disobedience campaign came near to rebellion. There has been ugly rioting. Lord Wavell's attempt to form an all-party government was a failure. The setting for a further attempt to achieve a compromise could hardly have looked blacker. Yet, those who have been close to the Cabinet Mission and to the Indian Party leaders speak of the good atmosphere which has prevailed. There have been grumblings and criticisms elsewhere in India, and rumours in plenty. But all the evidence points to the fact that between the leading men there has been, in spite of colossal difficulties, real encounter. The tone of Lord Wavell's broadcast speech in which he spoke of the greatness of mind that was needed to make concessions, and Mr. Gandhi's affirmation of faith in the Mission's intention, have reflected the renewal of the determination to bring about a settlement. The most significant difference between 1942 and 1946 is that instead of saying to the Indian leaders " agree among yourselves and we will do our part," the British Government is now saying, " here, in the plans for a provisional government and a constituent assembly is our contribution to the creation of agreement." Both the main political parties will have to make concessions costly in principle and to pride. The only alternative is a resort to threats and ultimately to force of arms.

There has been a good deal of irresponsible talk in this country to the effect that " Indian parties will only agree when there has been a little blood-letting." The destruction of great cities by atomic bombs may be the newest, but is certainly not the only and perhaps not even the worst horror which war can bring to mankind. The only hope of combatting or mitigating the ravages of the impending famine in India lies in the maintenance of peace. Once civil war is let loose no one can tell what horrors it may bring, or how far outside India it may spread. The Government has rightly interpreted the deepest instincts of the British people. In a world that is crazy with power politics, where the fate of the German people is counted as nothing as compared with the prestige of the powers, the Government has reasserted the fundamental belief that the lives of common people, the weak and unshepherded masses, should be the first concern of rulers.

Yours sincerely, Kathleen Bliss

SOME REFLECTIONS ON INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

BY L. JOHN EDWARDS, M.P.

There is at present a ferment in the industrial movement which defies analysis. The unofficial dock strike gave warning of the possibility of " discontent boiled bloody and bespilled." The immediate danger passed, but there was left the sobering reflection that very little is known of industrial relations as they really are. Even those of us who, as managers or trade union officials, are engaged continuously in industrial negotiations, and presume to judge industrial disputes, rarely think it worth our while to study them. How many managers, for example, keep a casebook of industrial disputes, and how many trade union officials record for future reference the complex of half-articulated grievances which make up the general discontent underlying many strikes ? It is small wonder that press reports of strikes seldom go beyond a description of the superficial symptoms, for we lack any skilled interpretation of the meaning of strikes. The reason for this is that wages and hours have been the traditional objects of strikes, and machinery for bargaining on them therefore exists. But a strike which crystallizes into a demand on wages and hours may have totally different causes —including discontent about promotion, welfare, working conditions, status of workers, personal dealings of managers.

We have, therefore, to begin by admitting that we know very little about industrial disorders—far less than we know about physical disease. We have learned how to use the material resources of the universe, but have scarcely begun to try to find out how to develop the unused potentialities of labour.

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE TRADE UNIONS

An analysis of industrial relations must begin with an understanding of the trade unions. A trade union is not a mere labour cartel. It has a group life of its own which to the keen member is as important as is congregational activity to the member of a church. Many trade union branches have a room in which they always meet. The walls carry the photographs of their ancestors, even the furniture has its history. The proceedings are partly

social, partly business. A union has its own values, its own internal laws, and a quasi-judicial system for the settlement of all internal disputes. Much of its life is reminiscent of the corporate life of the nonconformist chapel, from which so many trade unions had their beginnings.

The social and psychological group character of a union can be seen plainly when the members are on strike. There is then often a loyalty, sense of unity and power of endurance which are surprising to the outsider, but taken very much for granted by the members themselves. Nor is the loyalty given only by members to their own union. In 1926, at the time of the General Strike, the unity of the trade union movement as a whole was complete—which may be compared with the national disunity on the outbreak of war in 1914. The same principle of group life is seen when unions are faced, as many are at present, by unofficial movements within their ranks or by a breakaway body which threatens to form a dissentient union.

A union is essentially conservative and slow moving, and quick changes in its rules or its leadership are seldom possible. This makes on the one hand for stability and continuity, and on the other for difficulty in assimilating or coming to terms with rebels. More important is the fact that the group life of a union leads its leaders and loyal members to regard the rebel as anathema.

It is also necessary to look at the history of trade unions and to see how they arose. Springing from humble and primitive origins they had first to endure the brutal opposition of State and employers alike. Every obstacle was placed in their way and even when legal recognition had been secured, the opposition of many employers continued. The task of the union leader in these circumstances was inevitably that of organizing hostility.

Even to-day, when there are over eight million members of the trade union movement and when the unions are consulted by Government and employers at every turn, this attitude of hostility persists. There is still nothing which gives more satisfaction to the ordinary man in industry than to hear the boss denounced. Most trade union officials could " get away with murder " if they cursed the boss in sufficiently strong language. That an increasing number do not do so does not alter the fact that one of the greatest difficulties in building up new relationships in industry is the existence in positions of leadership of those who have made their way by the methods of antagonism. It is very difficult, for example, for the branch secretary of this type, who may himself have been victimized in the past, to sit down and try to co-operate with employers'

representatives. Even if he tries to do so he may be prevented by the " tougher " members who attend his branch meetings.

This kind of spirit dies hard, and it is to be found in publicly owned undertakings as well as in private industry. The nationalization of the mines, for example, will not alter overnight the prevailing attitude of mind of the mineworkers.

THE KEY POSITION OF MANAGEMENT IN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

To apportion blame is useless, but it should be recognized that managements are in the decisive position, both in public and private industry, and that what they do determines in the end the relationships between them and the workers. There is not now much open hostility to trade unions, but there are still many managements who, though paying lip-service to trade unionism, are really indifferent to it and appear to be concerned to see that the unions get as little credit as possible. An honest recognition of trade unions is essential for good relations in industry. Managers sometimes complain of the intransigent and unaccommodating attitude of shop stewards, but in fact managers get the shop stewards they deserve. The attitude of the management is the most decisive factor in the selection of workers' representatives, for workers tend to select representatives who are a match for their management.

The most enlightened of policies on the part of a management will fail unless the men and women in the factory feel that they have in some sense had a hand in making them. The late President Roosevelt very aptly referred on one occasion to " those habits of stupid obstinacy which sometimes make just decisions more exasperating than a real injustice." The wise manager always consults his workers' representatives even when he is certain that what he proposes to do is wholly in their interests.

The worker is almost always suspicious of the motives and activities of the management, of which he usually knows almost nothing except through shop rumours. There can be no hope of decent industrial relations unless " all the cards are on the table—face up." If the worker is to have a sense of status and responsibility he has to feel that he knows what there is to be known. If he feels that there are things which closely affect his work and life which he does not know—which are kept from him—he cannot have the status which he inherently wants. It is of the greatest importance that the workers should be fully informed in a general sense on the policies and activities of the undertaking for which they work, and

that they should be consulted on all matters concerning their working lives.

While the traditional methods of collective bargaining can continue to be used for dealing with wages, hours of work and similar matters, there is need, in the individual factory, for consultative machinery through which there can be full discussion on efficiency and production issues. It is important to stress that consultative machinery should not exist as an alternative way of ventilating grievances, but as a channel through which managers and men may make suggestions for improvements.

One great trouble is that in industry the people who make the rules also interpret them. War-time experience has shown that it is possible for certain labour problems to be referred to an independent National Service Officer. Development along these lines could well continue. The separation of functions—so familiar in political democracy—becomes essential in our economic life, the more we move towards industrial democracy.

WAGES AND PROMOTION

Two other matters call for mention—wages and promotion. In many industries the wages structure is out of date and needs drastic overhaul. Relative wages within an industry are often more important than the average wage. Examples could be quoted of industries in which the wages for every different process are fixed by separate agreement with the workers. The recent report of the Evershed Committee on wages in the cotton spinning industry is an example of how the simplification of wages structure can be considered. The unofficial strikes in the mining industry following the Porter award show how difficult it is to raise the wages of the unskilled while leaving the wages of the skilled worker unchanged.

Many of our industrial disputes in fact arise not over the total sum paid out in wages but over the distribution of it. What is badly needed is a commonly accepted set of principles governing relative wages, to which reference could be made in collective bargaining and in the settlement of differences by arbitration.

Promotion is another frequent cause of disputes. There is only one principle of direct promotion which workers are prepared to accept as fair—namely that the senior qualified man should get the vacancy. This might mean, of course, that the *most* qualified man would not get the job, but that would be a small matter in terms of efficiency if the workers were satisfied and contented.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND FULL EMPLOYMENT

One has finally to ask what will be the effect on industrial relations of full employment. All parties are now committed to policies of increased production and full employment. It is not surprising that trade unions still tend to adopt a negative attitude, for in a world where scarcity was dominant and unemployment a constant risk, they could not but adopt restrictive methods for their mutual protection.

Under the stimulus of total war the workers responded magnificently. Can this spirit be carried over into the peace? Will the unions abandon their restrictive practices? If they do not, the Government's economic programme will be a failure. It is a condition of success that men and women in industry shall grow in moral stature.

The same is true of industrial discipline. No longer will the employer have "the sanction of the sack." The only conceivable alternative to state direction is a high degree of self-discipline. Every possible experiment in self-discipline should be tried. Absenteeism, breach of workshop rules, and the like are well within the capacity for control of the workers themselves.

But responsibility of action to the community as a whole will not be possible on the workers' side unless the principle is also accepted at higher levels. Private industry at the present time is largely irresponsible. Directors and managers run the show, and while they have a legal responsibility to the shareholders, are a self-appointing oligarchy, having in practice no contact with the shareholders which has any significance in real terms. There is a need for a very radical revision of company law, recognizing the reality of the situation which is that the shareholders are merely lenders, not owners. There is a need also for greater clarity of accounts and the universal recognition in all but the very small concerns of the principle of public accountability.

The most difficult problem of all, when all this has been said and done, is how can you make men and women in industry as self-regarding about somebody else's affairs as they would be were they working for themselves? How can you get ordinary men and women to behave in industry as though it were their own show? I doubt whether there is an answer to be found without turning away from relations between men and managers, and looking at the over-all social situation. Whatever individual managers and workers may do within their own spheres of competence their actions always have to take place within the limitations of the

general economic situation at any time. Even if we had had employers and workers who were archangels we could not have prevented the sort of disputes which arose after the last war. Given an economic policy of deflation, a general strike was inevitable. It is unlikely therefore that the problems of industrial relations will be settled independently of broader social issues. The reconciliation of freedom in our traditional political sense with technical and economic efficiency presents us with one of the major public issues of the time.

Men and women in industry need above all else to feel that they belong to a society of which they can be proud, and that they are making a contribution to a community whose purposes they believe to be right. We are never going to achieve full employment, or draw from each man and woman in industry the hard day's work which will make it possible, unless, over and above the motives and incentives of managers here or trade union leaders there, there is a general widely-diffused sense among men and women of all kinds that they " own the show " and can make or mar the future. Only a deeply felt sense that this is their country and that purposefulness and hard work will bring their reward, can carry us through the years ahead. To put socialist legislation on the statute-book is one thing, but to kindle the imagination of a whole people is a more difficult and equally essential task for a Labour Government.

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